



# SPECTATORS IN THE HEAVENLY GRANDSTAND



Hebrews 12:1

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"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." (Hebrews 11:1)

**T**here are three questions I want you to be able to answer when you leave this service today.

1. Do people in heaven know what's going on down here. Can they see us from heaven?
2. What are the people in heaven most interested in?
3. What is the sin mentioned in verse 1?

## PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS ASKING THE FIRST QUESTION

They usually ask these questions when there is no time to answer them. Today, I want to answer them from the Bible.

### (Luke 15:3-7)

3 So He spoke this parable to them, saying: 4 "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' 7 I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine

just persons who need no repentance."

### Rejoicing

This verse says clearly that there is rejoicing in heaven when one sinner gets saved.

### Friends and neighbors

We know the sheep represents lost people, but who are those friends and neighbors who are invited to celebrate with the people who are rejoicing?

Are those "friends" angels? Or are they saved people who are already in heaven? or both?

Whoever those people are, they were concerned about what was happening on the earth. They were concerned about soul-winning. They were concerned about evangelism. They were concerned about people being saved. In fact, they were more concerned about lost people being saved than anything else that was happening on the earth (such as who wins American Idol, Dancing with the Stars, or the Super Bowl).

### (Luke 15:8-10)

8 "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? 9 And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!'

10 Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

This is similar but there is one thing added. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

### **Saved People?**

Could those people who are rejoicing in the presence of the angels be saved people who have already died and gone to heaven?

### **(Luke 8:28-35)**

"28 Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. 30 And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, 31 who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. 33 Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, that Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"--not knowing what he said. 34 While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. 35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!""

### **Moses and Elijah**

Two men who had already gone to heaven, came down and talked to Jesus and Peter saw them and recognized them.

How did Peter know who they were? Did Jesus introduce them? No! Peter, in his earthly body, recognized Moses and Elijah in their heavenly bodies.

### **Definitely from Heaven**

This was not a vision or a hallucination. These men were definitely from heaven.

### **(2 Kings 2:11-12)**

11 "And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. 12 And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel,

and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces."

### **Their Conversation**

When these two men came down to earth and talked to Jesus, what did they talk about? **(Vs 31)** "who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." Moses and Elisha spoke to Jesus about His coming death of on the cross to purchase salvation for lost souls.

- That is what people in Heaven are interested in.
- People in heaven are interested in Jesus dying for the sins of the world and God's people preaching and sharing that Good News and sinners being saved.

### **TRIBULATION MARTYRS IN HEAVEN**

### **(Revelation 6:9-11)**

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

11 And white robes were given unto every one

of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”

**This is literal.** Don't follow those who try to "spiritualize" the prophecies of The Revelation.

The early church interpreted The Revelation literally for the first 250 years of church history. It was then that a man named Origen from Alexandria introduced the allegorical method of interpretation that people departed from literal approach and began to spiritualize.

St. Augustine the Catholic Theologian followed Origen. St. Augustine's work, The City of God, turned people away from the historical normal method of interpretation and for the next one thousand years the original method of interpreting Scripture was lost. It is still lost in all Liberal Theological Schools today.

### **Tribulation Martyrs**

The people in these verses are martyrs who were killed for refusing to take the Mark of the Beast (666) during the Tribulation.

The Tribulation is a seven year period of unbelievable judgment upon the earth following the return of Christ for His church. Revelation 6 gives a summary of the entire seven-year Tribulation period.

### **(Revelation 13:15)**

15 "And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. 16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: 17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. 18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six."

### **Interested in Earth**

These people in heaven are interested in events taking place on the earth. They can see what's going on and they are concerned about what's going on.

### **Given Robes**

I can hear God say to Gabriel: "Gabriel! Give those martyrs some robes and tell them to sit tight. It's not quite over yet. There are a few more people down there who are going to refuse to take the mark of the Beast." They will choose to die for Christ rather than to take the Mark and worship the Beast (the Devil).

### **THE POINT! PEOPLE IN HEAVEN CAN SEE WHAT'S GOING ON DOWN HERE ON THE EARTH.**

### **WHO ARE THE PEOPLE IN HEBREWS 11:1?**

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand who these people are. Verse one begins with the word, "wherefore." This means, in the light of what was just said, here is the conclusion.

The word "wherefore" begins chapter 12. What was chapter 11 about? Chapter 11 gives the names of the people in the heavenly grandstand.

- By faith Abel . . .
- By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death;
- By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house;
- By faith Abraham, when he was called to go

out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

- Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.
- By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.
- 21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshiped, leaning upon the top of his staff.
- 22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.
- 23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the King's commandment.
- 24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; 26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. 27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. 28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. 29 By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.
- 30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.
- 31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not

with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

- 32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: 33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:
- 36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;
- 38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.
- 39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:
- 40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

## **THE ALUMNI IN THE GRANDSTANDS ARE WATCHING US**

### **WHAT ARE THEY WATCHING?**

They are watching us run our part in the great relay race. They ran by faith in their generation and they are in the grandstands cheering for us.

It's like a home-coming game at the swamp. The alumni are in the stands and you and I are like Tim Teebow, down on the playing field.

Moses, Joseph, Sampson are up there

screaming their lungs out and doing the gator jaw sign.

### **WHAT ARE THE INTERESTED IN?**

Let's be very specific! They are interested in us getting people saved. That's what it's all about.

The parable of the lost sheep is about getting people saved.

The parable of the lost coin is about getting people saved.

The parable of the prodigal son is about getting people saved.

This was the topic of conversation on the Mount of Transfiguration.

My great-grandfather Keith was a circuit riding preacher who finally settled in Elfers, Florida, served as pastor of the First Baptist Church and the local Postmaster. My great-grandfather is looking down here today. What do you think he's interested in? He's up there cheering: "Come on Gene! Don't quit! Don't give up! Try a little harder and somebody will be saved today."

Let me make it clear. One person being saved is far more important in Heaven than the Gators winning a world championship.

What do you really think Jack Smith, Don Epperson, Warren Brewer, Dick Hamman and Shirley Luke are interested in as they look down on us today?

### **ONE LAST QUESTION**

"Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

### **Every Weight (plural)**



When it says we are to lay aside every weight it means to get rid of everything in your life that will keep you from winning souls. Examine

your life today. It is probably cluttered with things that don't really matter. It's time to get rid of those things that slow you down and run. Run!  
RUN!

### **The Sin (Singular)**

This is important. What sin is it that keeps you from winning souls?

I was shocked to read in the last Moody Adams Report that sexual addiction is one of the most serious problems among Christians today. Moody reported that 37% of the pastors surveyed admitted that sexual addiction to pornography was their major sin. How can this be?

- Sexual addiction is not THE sin.
- Smoking/ Drinking are not THE sin.
- Stealing from God is not THE sin.
- Jealousy is not THE sin.
- Gossip is not THE sin.
- Not Tithing is not THE sin.

THE SIN that keeps most people from obeying God and winning souls lack of faith. That sin is unbelief.

God has commissioned us to go into all he world and preach the Gospel.

God has promised to be with us.

God has guaranteed results. Let's get going!

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